

**MINUTES OF THE QUARTERLY MEETING OF THE
SUSSEX INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
on 25th July 2024**

at Sussex Yacht Club, 85/89 Brighton Road, Shoreham-by-Sea

PRESENT

Members

Prof. Peter Jones (Chair)
Councillor Noel Atkins (Deputy Chair, West Sussex County Council)
Councillor Deborah Urquhart (West Sussex County Council)
Councillor Theresa Fowler (Brighton and Hove City Council)
Councillor Julia Hilton (East Sussex County Council) [Online]
Councillor Emma Evans (West Sussex County Council) [Online]
Dr Corina Ciocan (MMO Appointee) [Online]
Dr Paul Driver (MMO Appointee)
Gary Edwards (MMO Appointee)
Graham Furness (MMO Appointee)
Mark Bennett (EA Representative)
Julian Seaman (MMO Appointee)
Kim Matthews (MMO Appointee)
Danni Barrett (NE Representative)
Marcus Griffiths Substitute for Paul Johnson (MMO Representative)

Staff

Rob Pearson (Chief Fisheries & Conservation Officer)
Angharad Purcell (Deputy Chief Fisheries & Conservation Officer) [Online]
Rebecca Belleni (Committee Manager and Personal Assistant to SMT)
Jake Wilson (Fisheries & Conservation Research Officer)
Nick Rogers (Senior Conservation & Research Officer)
Tim Dapling (Strategic Advisor & Clerk)
Dr George Balchin (Conservation & Research Manager) [Online]

1 CHAIR & CHIEF OFFICER'S INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Prof. Peter Jones welcomed members and officers to the second quarterly principal committee meeting for SxIFCA and thanked those present for attending, in particular a welcome back to Cllr Deborah Urquhart, our new representative from WSCC, who previously sat on the Sea Fisheries Committee some years ago and brings knowledge and expertise. He continued, welcoming Danni Barratt as the replacement NE representative. He also welcomed Marcus Griffiths who is attending in place of Paul Johnson as the MMO representative for today's meeting.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Sam Adeniji (East Sussex County Council)
Garry Walker (MMO Appointee)
Prof. Paul Leonard (MMO Appointee)
Sally Ashby (MMO Appointee)
Paul Johnson (MMO Appointee)

Absent

Councillor Tom Liddiard (East Sussex County Council)

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

- 3.1 Julian Seaman as Harbour Master for Shoreham Port Authority, berthing providers for SxIFCA vessels and various inshore fishing vessels.
- 3.2 Gary Edwards and Kim Matthews declared an interest as active members of the fishing industry.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 4.1 The Chair, Prof. Peter Jones, asked for any comments and corrections from members on the minutes from the previous Quarterly Committee Meeting.
- 4.2 KM raised on pg.12 agenda item 9.9 would like the wording changed to 'hundreds in the fishing fleet will suffer.'
- 4.3 PPJ thanked KM and advised that the minutes would be amended accordingly.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the minutes.

5. MATTERS ARISING

- 5.1 Rob Pearson advised of one matter arising, which was submitted prior to the meeting in his absence by Prof. Paul Leonard. In relation to his request to Natural England for an update on whether the marine aggregate key data may have been found and considered against NE's most recent mapping data with regards to BHE.
- 5.2 DB responded to inform that Becca Turley followed this up prior to leaving NE and concluded that the aggregate levy data had been considered.
- 5.3 RP also raised in absence of Prof. Paul Leonard a query as to whether NE had had any input into the recent MEDIN open meeting on 24th April 2024.
- 5.4 DB advised that she would follow this up and inform at Q3.
- 5.5 TD, the Strategic Advisor and Clerk raised under appointments to subcommittees that SxIFCA formally appoint Cllr Deborah Urquhart to the Finance subcommittee.

DECISION ITEMS

6 Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2023

- 6.1 Rob Pearson introduced today's only decision item for members consideration but stated that it was an important one. He said the purpose of the report is to provide members with the final version of the management measures proposed for Beachy Head Marine Conservation Zone, as contained within Schedule 5 of the Marine Protected Areas Byelaw. And to seek members approval to submit the Marine Protected Areas Byelaw and accompanying Impact Assessment, to the MMO and Defra for the quality assurance process and sign off by the Secretary of State.
- 6.2 Rob Pearson took time to summarise to committee members the extensive development process that has got to this point, as detailed in the report, with the Byelaw being made at the Principal Committee meeting held this time last year, after development of the initial management measures through an informal consultation process and consideration by our Technical Committee. The first formal consultation was then held in September through to October 2023, which led to an amendment to the proposed management, due to the provision of additional evidence provided by Natural England on the presence of designated features within the site. Because of the substantive nature of this amendment, which further restricted the access to bottom towed fishing gear within the site, we conducted a second formal consultation on the amended measures in March through to April this year.

- 6.3 Rob Pearson explained that at our previous committee meeting in April, shortly after the closing of the second consultation, members approved the recommendation for our Technical Subcommittee to consider the responses from the second formal consultation. He directed members to paragraph 3.12 in the report, and continued that members will note that 99 formal written consultation responses were received within the second formal consultation period; all these were collated into a single document and where needed anonymised and redacted for GDPR purposes and supplied to the technical subcommittee for consideration. They have been provided for members here as Annex 4.
- 6.4 Rob Pearson further explained the tabulated summary of analysis of responses that was also considered at the Technical Subcommittee and is supplied as Annex 5. He said that the document categorises levels of support for the proposed extension, as well as other management scenarios that were raised by respondents, but which did not represent the proposals under consultation. He added that an example of this from one area of discussion at the technical subcommittee was that it was evident that a large proportion of respondents hadn't fully considered the consultation documents, and were declaring a preference for management options that were not under consultation, such as full site exclusion to bottom towed gear. However, in considering the level of support, it was logical to assume that a respondent promoting full site management would be in favour of the increased exclusion of bottom towed gear through the amended measure, which was an extension of Zone 1. The sector that each respondent represented was also aggregated, this involved some level of interpretation, however an N/A was used where sector couldn't be reliably ascertained. He said that there were responses from local businesses, a local school, local residents and recreational anglers as well as NGO's.
- 6.5 Rob Pearson informed members on the response from Natural England, in support of the amended management measures.
- 6.6 Rob Pearson raised that there were no recorded responses from commercial fishers. However he said that as fishers have been engaged throughout the development of the measures, there is generally an understanding and acceptance of why the management is being introduced.
- 6.7 Rob Pearson explained that many responses expressed a preference for full exclusion of towed gear within the site, presumably based on a precautionary approach, but without providing any substantive evidence for why this should be considered. He added that this would of be contrary to the evidence-based approach taken through the entire development of the management measures and after review and consideration of the responses, it was apparent that no new substantive evidence was supplied, in regard to impacts on the designated features, the site's conservation objectives, or socio-economic factors. This concluded in no further amendments to the byelaw being reccomended, following the Technical Subcommittee meeting.

- 6.8 Rob Pearson finally said on recommendation of the Technical Subcommittee, the final Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2023 with Schedules 1-5 (Annex I) and Management Zones (Annex II) are provided for consideration of the Principal Committee, reflecting no amendments to the proposed Schedule 5, post second formal consultation.
- 6.9 Tim Dapling raised from a pictorial aspect, pages 55 and 56 in the meeting document which show the area and specifically the SxIFCA district boundary and the small area of the MCZ outwith six miles, stating that this byelaw does not cover the small outlying areas and this requires a separate byelaw from the MMO.
- 6.10 Tim Dapling further added from a planning and procedural point, this is the final piece to complete SxIFCA MPA management within the 2024 deadline proposed by Defra.

Recommendations:

- i. That, members approve the Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2023 as presented, for submission to the MMO and Defra for quality assurance and confirmation.**
- ii. That, members approve the Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2023 Impact Assessment.**
- iii. That, as appropriate, Senior IFCA officers liaise with MMO and Defra officials to progress the Byelaw through the quality assurance process, to final confirmation, and support as required any necessary non-substantive amendments agreed with MMO & Defra legal advisers.**
- iv. That, subject to the Authority's Byelaw approval, consultees are provided with a written response explaining how the Authority has considered their response and what, if any, amendments have been made in respect to their issues.**

ALL RESOLVED to accept the recommendations.

INFORMATION ITEMS

7 Netting Permit Byelaw

- 7.1 Rob Pearson informed that this information item was to provide an update to members on the amendments to the Netting Permit Byelaw

2019 on the re-engagement process that was proposed and approved by the authority at our principal committee meeting on 8th February 2024 and to propose the next stage in progressing the byelaw and the associated flexible permit conditions.

- 7.2 Rob Pearson then explained the extensive background to the development of the Netting Permit Byelaw was presented to members at the principal meeting on the 8th February 2024, when members approved to conduct a re-engagement process. He said that this was delivered in accordance with Defra’s guidance and given the authority’s existing annual planning requirement to publicly consult on intended byelaw management for BHE MCZ in early in 2024, it was decided to delay the Netting Permit re-engagement slightly, so they did not run concurrently.
- 7.3 Rob Pearson informed members that SxIFCA conducted the re-engagement process as per the statutory guidance, which commenced on 23rd May 2024 for a period of 5 weeks. A regulatory notice was published over two consecutive weeks in Fishing News and shared over our website, social platforms and emails were sent to stakeholders. He explained that although no formal drop-in sessions were proposed, an invitation request for in-person or telephone meetings was included, which several stakeholders took advantage of with meetings at SxIFCA office, on site within the district and over the telephone by the CFO and DCFO.
- 7.4 Rob Pearson advised that this process had now closed and there were 29 responses submitted from a range of stakeholders. The next step would be to hold a Technical Subcommittee, where these will be considered and he proposed that this takes place in September 2024. He added that potential dates for this would be shared via Doodle poll.
- 7.5 Gary Edwards asked if the Technical Subcommittee could be in the second half of September and also would like to reopen the discussion around a set date every month left open for Technical Subcommittee meetings to be held to ensure availability, stressing that this is a main factor as to why he is on the SxIFCA committee and he would be happy to keep dates clear if it meant he could then attend. He further added the difficulty when his work is booked a year in advance to then have no structure to dates for when there may be a Technical Subcommittee.
- 7.6 Theresa Fowler said that due to council commitments it is preferable to have a Doodle poll.
- 7.7 Gary Edwards explained that as a Commercial Fishermen this is something he doesn’t want to miss, therefore he is open to evening or weekend meetings if there is no way round structured dates. He again stressed that he is booked a year in advance for his charter business but that it is important to represent the fishing community within these meetings and would sacrifice loss of earnings to be able to attend.

- 7.8 Mark Bennett proposed that this decision could be discussed and agreed by the Technical Subcommittee members.
- 7.9 Prof. Peter Jones raised that if a certain date every month is agreed it may be that we have less members available for that due to commitments and less flexibility that a Doodle poll enables.
- 7.10 Mark Bennett explained that in the short term, it may be that the dates are less attended but if all members are aware going forward it will be a certain date each month, should there be one, then it will in time become a priority.
- 7.11 Prof. Peter Jones advised members to give this some thought and then we will propose it as an item for discussion at the Technical Subcommittee meeting in September.
- 7.12 Tim Dapling advised that it would be beneficial to have the Technical Subcommittee dates in the month that precedes the Principal Committee meetings, and this would then only be four provisional dates per year.
- 7.13 Gary Edwards thanked members for considering this proposal and stated how important attending the meetings is to him and what he represents.
- 7.14 Tim Dapling made members aware that they are able to submit a loss of earnings claim for any committee days where they are in attendance.
- 7.15 Kim Matthews raised a point from the Netting Permit Byelaw on page 147 the spatial areas stated as 400m west of Shoreham Harbour and 3000m east of the landward side of the west breakwater and asked if this was correct.
- 7.16 Tim Dapling informed that it was correct as it is taking into account Shoreham Power station outfall.
- 7.17 Kim Matthews questioned that this is not 3km away.
- 7.18 Tim Dapling said he would look into this but as he recalls the rationale for this is due to a particular issue with the Power station and the extent of the warm water outfall which attracted large numbers of juvenile bass.
- 7.19 Gary Edwards commented on how complicated this byelaw had become and very hard to understand and digest.
- 7.20 Tim Dapling agreed with Gary Edwards and explained the challenges, including spatial management and a permit byelaw with two different types of permits for commercial and recreational fishers. He said with all byelaws there is extensive guidance produced specifically for each, focussing on the sections relevant to the different fishing sectors and in a format, maps and language simpler to understand, that we cannot use within the byelaw itself. He added that this is a consequence of having more flexibility for various factors in a byelaw.

- 7.21 Gary Edwards wanted to ask why 20kg is the weight limit for a recreational fishing.
- 7.22 Tim Dapling explained that the decision taken at the time during the development was that this was not an unreasonable amount.
- 7.23 Gary Edwards replied, stating that if they catch a lot more then this would have to be thrown back into the sea potentially dead.
- 7.24 Tim Dapling stated that this was a reason why recreational fishing limits were restricted on the amount of net they could use and exclude drift netting.
- 7.25 Gary Edwards raised that 60metres of net for a recreational fisherman is quite a significant restriction and therefore if he were to catch 40kg one day he would have to throw back 20kg of fish and stated how he does not support the discarding of fish in this manner.
- 7.26 Cllr. Theresa Fowler said that without this 20kg restriction in place there is a likelihood that the amount of fish taken would be higher through no restriction.
- 7.27 Gary Edwards responded to this by advising 60 metres of net is small and it would be rare that someone caught above 20kg. He added that this is another rule to complicate the byelaw and is not warranted and enforceable.
- 7.28 Tim Dapling explained that SxIFCA felt it was appropriate to have a catch limit in place to provide a ceiling as there is always the risk this will be abused and could support a situation where unregistered vessels are catching and selling fish.
- 7.29 Gary Edwards contested this and said selling fish is the concern of the MMO and SxIFCA need to focus on the netting byelaw.
- 7.30 Prof. Peter Jones appreciates the concern on fish being thrown back but raised that when there is a quota it is instinctively problematic, though it does not mean we shouldn't have quotas. He added that some people would argue that this is not enough, and others will argue it is too much which is why we try to find the balance in this for all involved. He also reminded members that this particular point is not one of the amendments for consideration for this re-engagement consultation.
- 7.31 Gary Edwards said he was disappointed he wasn't on the Technical Subcommittee earlier when this was considered and approved.
- 7.32 Kim Matthews referenced SxIFCA's vision of taking a balanced view, as he reads that the full weight of legislation is now falling upon restricting the inshore fleet. He added that this is not just the IFCA but also the MMO and MCA and that it is not balanced. He further stressed how confusing the byelaw and the flexible permit conditions are to differentiate between and

asked if the flexible byelaw would then require another consultation to change.

- 7.33 Rob Pearson replied to confirm that if we were to change the flexible permit conditions in the future this would still require public consultation. He further explained that the introduction of flexible permit conditions allows SxIFCA to take a more adaptive approach to the management much like the Shellfish Permit Byelaw. This means if there was new evidence or new fishing pressures or activity, we could look at that evidence and decide to amend the flexible permit conditions after consulting with stakeholders, but this would not have to pass through Defra for sign off by the SoS.
- 7.34 Kim Matthews raised concern regarding the flexible permit condition of 2 metre depth over the headline.
- 7.35 Rob Pearson confirmed this was 1.5 metre over the headline but the minimum depth the net can be set in is 2 metres.
- 7.36 Gary Edwards questioned the measurements and said he has never seen a net that anchors on the seabed and sits 18 inches high.
- 7.37 Tim Dapling advised this was included as a minimum depth for any net to be set and was added when the spatial aspect of distance from the shore was removed.
- 7.38 Kim Matthews explained that Worthing have shallow areas and therefore the fishing fleet there will not be about to fish within a mile of the shore.
- 7.39 Rob Pearson informed that there have been responses from the Worthing fishing fleet that will be considered at the Technical Subcommittee.

Recommendations:

- i. **To note the actions taken to deliver the public re-engagement process on the amended Netting Permit Byelaw 2019.**
- ii. **To note the annexes associated with this report, that constitute the documents shared for the purpose of the re-engagement process as follows:**

Annex I Netting Permit Byelaw Re-engagement Document

Annex II Netting Permit Byelaw Consultee Response Document

Annex III Original Netting Permit Byelaw 2019

Annex IV Amended Netting Permit Byelaw 2019

Annex V Original Netting Permit Byelaw 2019 Flexible Permit Conditions

Annex VI Amended Netting Permit Byelaw 2019 Flexible Permit Conditions

- iii. **To approve the recommendation for a Technical Subcommittee meeting to be held in September, prior to the October Principal Committee meeting, to consider the consultation responses from the re-engagement process. With the objective to consider the requirement for any further amendments, and proposing a recommendation to the Principal Committee for consideration.**

ALL RESOLVED to accept the recommendations.

8 Financial Statements 2023/2024

- 8.1 The Chief Officer, Rob Pearson, introduced this item and explained that the purpose of the report is to present the Authority's financial statements 2023/2024 following their independent examination.
- 8.2 Rob Pearson reminded members that our previous auditors, Plummer Parsons had ceased to operate for small scale local authorities and therefore recommended a new agent, James Todd & Co to act as our internal auditor. The audit has now been carried out and the outcome was reported to the Finance Subcommittee earlier today with two recommendations. He explained that one of these was in relation to our office lease and if we were to move when the lease is up for renewal that a dilapidation provision and the other was regarding our fixed administrative penalties as we are awaiting confirmation on whether these are paid to the Treasury, and they are currently held as credit.
- 8.3 Rob Pearson informed that James Todd & Co also carried out an independent examination of our draft financial statements 2023/2024 and no changes were required to the draft financial statement, and this was recommended for approval by the Finance Subcommittee. This showed the Authority's financial activity gave rise to a surplus of £5,168 in 2023/2024, and that this surplus was added to Reserves at the year end. The total amount held in Reserves on 31st March 2024 was £1,816,731.
- 8.4 Rob Pearson stated that this was a clean bill of health from the auditors and reflective of the excellent work from our Finance Manager, Lucy Francis.
- 8.5 Gary Edwards asked if we keep the money from the Fixed Administrative Penalties at the moment.
- 8.6 Rob Pearson explained that this money is held in an account as we wait confirmation on whether this is to be paid to the Treasury.

- 8.7 Tim Dapling said that if the money is confirmed to be kept by the IFCAs it is hoped it would be used towards fishing improvement schemes.
- 8.8 Prof. Peter Jones informed the committee that unfortunately this was Lucy's last report as she is leaving SxIFCA for pastures new but in her absence, he thanked her for all her work and the noted that the feedback from auditors confirms that she has been outstanding as our Finance Manager.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

9 Conservation and Research Update

- 9.1 Nick Rogers introduced this item briefly but was happy for both reports to be taken as read, however he took time to highlight some of the main workstreams from the quarter.
- 9.2 Nick Rogers advised that focus would now move away from BHE and there will be more focus on the Kingmere MCZ review. He also said that there has been a lot of work to contribute to the FMP development, in particular the Black Bream FMP. He further added that the hope is that we will soon commence a scallop potting trail in Bognor Regis with a local fisher. He also said that the flying array which was purchased from Devon and Severn IFCA has been trailed this week in the hope this will replace the current towed video set up for habitat monitoring between Shoreham and Selsey.
- 9.3 Nick Rogers informed members that the wider team at SxIFCA had undergone some small fish ID and seine net training with the EA. He said that with regards to small fish surveys there has been work with SWT to restart these surveys in Rye.
- 9.4 Nick Rogers wanted to note the Shellfish Permit catch return report.
- 9.5 Nick Rogers took time to highlight work from the Annual Report by mentioning the work with Plymouth University on the fish telemetry project, and said that we have had recent dates for data gathering which is being compiled into a report and several publications.
- 9.6 Dr George Balchin advised that this first Fish Intel publication should be out sometime in the near future, pending some small revisions.
- 9.7 Nick Rogers continued to update on the large amount of work that has gone into updating the HRAs and commended Jake Wilson for his work on this.

- 9.8 Prof. Peter Jones thanked Nick Rogers for this update and commented on the diversity of the Conservation and Research activities and work which underpins many of our management proposals and decisions.
- 9.9 Dr Paul Driver referenced the report and asked for an update on the crab and lobster monitoring, and confirmation that this will be conducted every few weeks throughout the year and asked to hear more on this.
- 9.10 Nick Rogers explained that unfortunately Vanessa Simons, who has got this project off the ground, is not here in person to update but he added that she went up to Northumberland IFCA to experience how they conduct a similar survey programme, and is now working with fishermen from Selsey in our district. He said the first potting survey commenced at the start of June with the intent to conduct these monthly. This data will help our shellfish permit data and provide further information for the Crab & Lobster FMP.
- 9.11 Dr George Balchin informed that our intention is to go out once a month, weather dependent, and this would give us more of an insight into crab and lobster populations. The hope is that this will feed into a regionally accurate stock assessment for Sussex. He added that this was triggered by conversations with Dr Paul Driver and Cefas around stock assessments.
- 9.12 Cllr. Deborah Urquhart raised the response to Rampion 2 and questioned if there were any major concerns from a conservation perspective with this going ahead.
- 9.13 Gary Edwards advised he was involved with Rampion 1 and stated that they didn't fulfil their research requirements. He said there was no research done on electrical fields around the cables and feels they resist doing this as it will affect sharks and rays and it is questionable if this has affected species such as dover sole through electrical impulses from the cables. He stated that they do not commit to leaving everything as it was prior to work, the cabling sites were not covered as planned and also the jack-up barges have still scarred the underwater area which can be seen on Navionics shading charts.
- 9.14 Prof. Peter Jones explained that SxIFCA is a statutory consultee but not part of the decision-making process, but we have submitted a very detailed response.
- 9.15 Rob Pearson added that there are slightly different processes in regard to planning and consultation for the project as it is a nationally significant infrastructure project. He said the work on this over the past few months has been agreeing a statement of common ground with Rampion and we have raised certain issues specifically on nesting bream, herring spawning and noise, that will then be shared with the planning authorities.
- 9.16 Dr George Balchin explained that this is a huge piece of work which is predominantly overseen by Dr Jen Lewis and advised if there was anything specific to discuss they should contact her. He said that he did share some

of Gary Edwards concerns about the thoroughness with which the research has been undertaken for the project. He added that Dr Jen Lewis has sent a robust response with regards to mitigation measures.

- 9.17 Gary Edwards informed that Rampion would engage with commercial fishing individuals but not charter or angling stakeholders as he said they don't recognise these stakeholders as being affected by the windfarm, which he stressed is not the case. He further asked if we were involved in the surveys that are currently taking place.
- 9.18 Dr George Balchin responded to say that Sussex IFCA is not directly involved in the Rampion surveys, but he believes that they are modelling noise impact and topology of the seabed and habitat. He said impacts on Kingmere MCZ are a concern, and this is the case for NE also.
- 9.19 Gary Edwards replied to say surveys are being conducted at present and none of the commercial or recreational fishing fleets have been notified. He also has concern over crabs getting impacted by the electrical field of the cables and becoming inactive and dying. He concluded that this is something that needs work research especially around how the placement of cables could affect the migration of species.
- 9.20 Prof. Peter Jones advised he agrees and indeed SxIFCA will continue to keep this on the Conservation and Research agenda. He added as noted from the news this morning, the new government are taking a more streamlined approach with the Crown Estate to push approvals though faster for offshore renewables.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

10 Compliance and Enforcement Report

- 10.1 Angharad Purcell briefly summarised the report and highlighted figures for the intelligence report, including various inspections and boardings with any sanctions issued and ongoing investigation work.
- 10.2 Angharad Purcell advised that enforcement work this quarter was focused on the Shellfish Permit Byelaw, particularly the cuttlefish season at the start of the quarter. She added there was also a focus on the Fixed Engine Byelaw, National Bass Regulations and MPA Byelaw.
- 10.3 Angharad Purcell explained that the fishing activities throughout the district and officers patrol objectives are summarised by each port and fishing station and grouped into east, central and west of the district.

- 10.4 Angharad Purcell informed on figures from the intelligence report with a total of 51 patrols this quarter with a breakdown on these figures for members as per the report.
- 10.5 Angharad Purcell further added that the weather had been generally good, but with the annual boatlift of Watchful, this was not in operation towards the latter of the quarter, though FPV Merlin was utilised to carry out sea patrols.
- 10.6 Cllr. Julia Hilton raised a concern passed on to her on the spider crab population increase and asked if there was anything being done to control them.
- 10.7 Rob Pearson briefly explained that we aware stakeholders within the district were encountering higher numbers of spider crabs for longer periods of the year, and this is having a particular impact on net fishers. He said it used to be that this was an issue for a short period of time for inshore fishers, though they seem to be prevalent for longer now, which is likely to be down to climate change. He mentioned that in the Southwest they are looking at marketing them as Cornish King Crab but the difficulty in Sussex is they don't reach the marketable size compared to the Southwest.
- 10.8 Gary Edwards said that the increasing trouble is due to less hard frosts in winter which would usually drive them offshore. He added that the only use would be as bait for whelk pots but due to national size restrictions this is prohibited. He also said that the quality of spider crab here is poor unlike the Cornish due to the water they migrate from not being cold enough.
- 10.9 Marcus Griffiths informed that a colleague at the MMO, Jonny Brooks is conducting a project to specifically look at spider crabs and what can be done to alleviate pressures and other ways to make them commercially viable and he will put SxIFCA in touch with him.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

11 Vessel Maintenance Log

- 11.1 Prof. Peter Jones informed members that the log in its entirety is included in the report and can be taken as read. He added that FVP Watchful has had a very thorough sandblasting to take the antifouling accumulated over 20 years back to the bare hull and he said that the Marine Ops Charlie team are delighted with this work, adding that SxIFCA have the best maintained vessels in the IFCA fleets.
- 11.2 Prof. Peter Jones expressed his well wishes to Charlie Hubbard on his upcoming operation.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

12 Communications Report

- 12.1 Angharad Purcell introduced this item briefly and said the report demonstrates the actions we have taken to engage with stakeholders over the past quarter, and stated the wide range of various channels this has been actioned through.
- 12.2 Angharad Purcell advised that the website is running as expected with over 4000 visitors this quarter and the permit database is functioning well.
- 12.3 Angharad Purcell informed that it has been a particularly busy quarter with regards to publicity as we had BHE and Netting Permit second consultations and a recruitment process for the IFCO role.
- 12.4 Angharad Purcell said that we continue to utilise multiple social media platforms with our own content and also posting in collaboration with other partnerships. She said one recent example on tope tagging, in collaboration with Angling for Sustainability via the University of Plymouth, had nearly 10,000 views, which was excellent for SxIFCA engagement and thanks was given to Rebecca Belleni for driving forward our engagement through social media.
- 12.5 Angharad Purcell reminded members that we now have LinkedIn which is doing well and proved valuable with our recruitment recently.
- 12.6 Prof. Peter Jones again thanked Rebecca Belleni for raising the profile of SxIFCA on our communications channels and to Angharad Purcell and colleagues for their work on partnerships.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

13 Chief Fisheries and Conservation Officer Report

- 13.1 Rob Pearson introduced this report as a brief update to members on general matters and key workstreams.
- 13.2 Rob Pearson highlighted ongoing FMP work and how this is progressing; as suggested at the Principal Committee Meeting of 25th April 2024, the attention and focus for the FMP workstream is now shifting to consider the implementation of measures detailed within the already published FMP's. Led by Rob Clarke of the AIFCAs and Will Wright of Kent & Essex IFCA,

recent discussions with the MMO and Defra have centred around how the IFCAs are currently delivering under the objectives of the published FMPs, and where our existing management, data/evidence collection and experience can integrate and add value, in consideration of emerging management measures. He said that in support of this, in June, SxIFCA participated in a series of online workshops held between the IFCA's, MMO and Defra. Four workshops were held, one on each of the Crab & Lobster, Whelk, Scallop and Channel Demersal NQS FMP's.

Focussing on the short- and medium-term actions for each FMP, each IFCA was provided the opportunity to present and provide detail on the work streams already being undertaken that would contribute towards these actions which are listed in the report. He added that the workshops demonstrated distinct differences in management between the districts but that there is a considerable amount of effective management by the IFCA's already in place, which is already contributing to the objectives of each of the fishery management plans, and it is hoped that the MMO and Defra will recognise the good work already being done, learn from the effective regional management in existence, and work collaboratively to ensure that the national plans can integrate effectively with the regional management currently in place.

- 13.3 Rob Pearson further advised that SxIFCA had also attended two workshops in the last quarter on the development of the Whelk FMP, hosted by Seafish who were involved in developing the Whelk FMP. They have focussed on restricting access to the fishery through promoting what was originally termed an 'entitlement scheme', but what has now been rebranded as a 'fishery access mechanism'. He said that SxIFCA are one of numerous IFCA's who have concerns over potential for restricting access to the fishery, through capping the number of permits or entitlements, rather than the consideration of further technical measures such as pot limitations or minimum size restrictions. He stated that some fishing stakeholders have advised they would have objected to the Whelk FMP if the consultation had clearly proposed this. Rob Pearson also added that this restriction would limit fishers ability to diversify and access mixed fisheries according to seasonal opportunities. Due to the strategic and political nature of some of the questions asked, Sussex IFCA have joined a call to request more time, in order to allow us to conduct stakeholder outreach and supply a report for consideration of Authority Members, prior to responding to Seafish.
- 13.4 Dr. Paul Driver asked if Seafish were receptive to the comments from the IFCA's.
- 13.5 Rob Pearson replied to say that this has only been added very recently and it is hopeful they are in agreement. He also added that there are discussions between the MMO and Seafish around the ongoing development of the FMP.

- 13.6 Kim Mathews asked if there were any indications as to whether the whelk fishery was sustainable. He referred to the enforcement report whereby two boats are being converted to whelk fishing.
- 13.7 Rob Pearson agreed with Kim Mathews and said there are indicators that this may not be as sustainable as we would like it to be, but we need to look to agree on the correct measures through the FMP development process to aid this becoming sustainable.
- 13.8 Kim Matthews raised concern on the collapse of the whelk fishery in Kent and Essex which he said was a matter of time before it spills into our district and stressed the issue that if this were to collapse it would add pressures on netting fisheries.
- 13.9 Gary Edwards advised in regards to catch restrictions that the MMO never link the price of the product with the management and stressed that to have a sustainable fishery the effort has to be aligned with the price and value of the stock.
- 13.10 Tim Dapling explained that whelk is a particularly vulnerable species due to being quite localised, therefore if it is fished hard in one area that locality could fail to recover.
- 13.11 Gary Edwards made reference to the Shellfish Permit Byelaw restriction of 300 whelk pots when the value of whelk was lower, and now that the value is higher the pot limit should be reduced to reflect the value of the stock doubling in that time.
- 13.12 Rob Pearson said that this is a worthwhile discussion to have with Gary Edwards which would benefit the Whelk FMP feedback.
- 13.13 Rob Pearson informed members on the Health, Safety and Wellbeing report and our commitment to review our requirements. He stated the lost time/sickness across the organisation showed that in 2022 we experienced 37 lost days, in 2023 we had 36 lost days. This equates to less than 1% lost time across all staff, significantly lower than the local government national average of 5%, well below our maximum target threshold as detailed in the SxIFCA Sickness Absence Policy.
- 13.14 Rob Pearson highlighted the table in the report to show accidents and near miss incidents, which were low in number and the shared outcomes from those.
- 13.15 Rob Pearson briefly informed on recruitment and governance by advising that the past quarter has seen one resignation of an Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Officer, Laura Wallace and wished her all the best in the future. He said recruitment for the replacement has been conducted and we can now welcome Max Blighton who is an experienced Fishery Enforcement Officer, joining us from the MMO.

- 13.16 Rob Pearson updated members of the recent resignation of our Finance Manager, Lucy Francis who will be a sorely missed member of the team.
- 13.17 Rob Pearson advised that there is still a vacancy for a General Member appointee from the MMO with a background or specialist knowledge in Commercial Fishing within the district.
- 13.18 Rob Pearson finally highlighted the visual chart in the report with the various stages of each byelaw. He also added that the Section 167 agreement with Southern IFCA was still awaiting sign off and this has been held up due to the pre-election period subsequent change of Government.

ALL RESOLVED to approve the report and appendices.

14 Chief Officers Group

- 14.1 Rob Pearson informed that he is happy for this report to be taken as read.

ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

15 Association of Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authorities

- 15.1 Rob Pearson advised that Rob Clarke has worked with Sarah Coulthard at Newcastle University to develop small scale fisheries workshops in September / October. He said the intention is to develop two workshops which aim to bring together commercial fishers, fisher organisations, fisheries regulators, policy makers, and academics to share knowledge about universal, and regionally specific, drivers of decline in small-scale fisheries and their impact on coastal communities. He added that this would then help co-design a set of recommendations to address the decline. This is an IFCA led project to address the decline in small-scale fishers. He said that the southern workshop will be held in Poole in September, and is happy to confirm that Kim Matthews will be attending, along with himself and possibly the Chair, to represent Sussex IFCA.

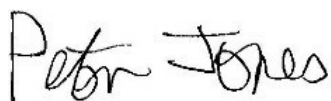
ALL RESOLVED to accept the report.

16 A.O.B.

- 16.1 Gary Edwards raised an issue on the four fish bream limit in Kingmere with regards to the guidance which states you can't return fish to the sea dead, as he sees the two as contradicting each other.
- 16.2 Gary Edwards secondly requested clarification on towed gear and towing lures from poles, with the question on if this is long lining or is it under towed gear. He also raised drifting long lines which is not mentioned and required clarification.
- 16.3 Kim Matthews wanted it noted that several members and staff attended the Sussex Bay launch and he felt it was anti-fishing. He said there were 400 attendees but felt there was little consideration for the inshore fishing community. He did add that they state on the website that they respect the artisan fishing methods rather than industrial. He feels this is a big item that will need discussion in coming meetings.
- 16.4 Prof. Peter Jones advised that there is a meeting planned with Sussex Bay founder, Paul Brewer and colleagues in the coming months to discuss and pose some questions.

17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 17.1 24th October 2024.
- 17.2 Note for apologies in advance from Prof. Peter Jones and Cllr. Theresa Fowler.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Peter Jones'.

Prof. Peter Jones, Chair Sussex IFCA.